

Elements of a “Joint Statement of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Environment of the ECO Member States”

9 December 2023, Dubai

(on the sidelines of the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference)

- *Welcomed* the outgoing ECO Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2023 under the vigorous theme of “Green Transition and Interconnectivity”.
- *Reiterated* that the environment and impacts of climate change has been designated as a cross-sectoral priority of the Organization and *called upon* the ECO Member States to further mainstream the environment and climate resilience in development planning, programming, and budgeting nationally and across the region. In this context, the Meeting also *realized* the need to concentrate on regaining balance with nature and exploring ways to provide clean energy for all.
- *Called for* a stronger regional cooperation and solidarity in environmental and climate action that are imperative to protect our common environment. To accomplish this goal, the Meeting *resolved* on defining common grounds and niches in the areas where the Member States will strive to make progress and strengthen regional capacities. In this vein, the Meeting *re-emphasized* the need in enhancement of cooperation amongst the ECO Member States within major global entities and conventions on environment. The Meeting *advised* that a more networked, inclusive, and effective ECO could be evolved for environmental action and SDG acceleration through concerted and collective endeavours.
- *Noted with appreciation* the development of the new “ECO Cooperation Framework on the Environment (2023-2030)” and its two Annexes, namely “Work Program on Climate Change in ECO Region (2023-2030)” and “Work Program on Biodiversity in ECO Region (2023-2030)” as a long-term regional strategy, which streamlines key priorities and action areas in the ECO Region for environmental cooperation in view of the rapidly evolving global environmental and climate agenda. Therefore, the Meeting *recommended* the Cooperation Framework for adoption by the decision-making bodies of ECO. Meanwhile, the Meeting *recommended* to hold detailed consultation and coordination with a view to agree upon a common ground document for guiding the regional activities on such topical issues for ECO Region as desertification, land degradation, sand storm and dust haze.
- *Emphasized* the importance of the High-Level Dialogue Platform on Environmental Cooperation, which was established in the course of the 16th ECO Summit in Tashkent in November 2023, as a promising advisory mechanism involving academia and contributing to environmental sustainability in the ECO Region. The Meeting also *underscored* that the subject Platform may find solutions to environmental challenges, explore ways to enhance cooperation on environment and determine the scope of regional collaboration in the ECO Region. In this vein, the Meeting *welcomed* the willingness of the Republic of Uzbekistan to organize the first meeting of this Platform on the sidelines of the Samarkand Climate Forum in March/April 2024 and jointly develop the Samarkand Declaration with a view to combat sand and dust storms.

- *Noted with appreciation* the existing country-led global initiatives with strong focus on environmental action by some of ECO Member States, notably International Decade for Action 'Water for Sustainable Development' by Tajikistan, 'Sustainable Mountain Development' by the Kyrgyz Republic and 'Zero Waste' Initiative by Her Excellency, Emine Erdoğan, the First Lady of Türkiye as the most recent one.
- *Recognized* that a gradual transition to a regenerative economic model is critical for climate neutrality and needs multilevel governance to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, GHG emissions and resource use. The Member States thus *resolved* to jointly advocate for a just transition to a resource-efficient, circular and regenerative economy, and support coherent policies for circularity and more sustainable management of natural resources in the ECO Region. In this regard, they *welcomed* the Regional Initiative on Resource Efficiency, Sustainability and Circular Economy in the ECO Region (RESCUE), initiated by ECO Secretariat in partnership with the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan in ECO, as a possible collaborative platform to launch and advance the future-oriented joint action in this respect. They also *took note* that RESCUE may contribute to positioning the ECO Region as a proponent of just and sustainable transition in international arena to address climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.
- *Welcomed* the breakthrough decision on formal launching of Loss and Damage Fund during the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28 of UNFCCC) in Dubai for vulnerable countries devastated by natural disasters linked to global warming. The Meeting *expressed hope* that the subject Fund will address the developing countries' priorities and therefore, *called for* its earliest and effective operationalization. The Meeting *committed* to enhance cooperation among ECO countries for mitigation and adaptation activities against climate risks.
- *Took note of* the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2022, recognizing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right. The Meeting also *recognized* that while not legally binding, UNGA resolutions can serve as catalysts for action.
- *Emphasized* the need to incorporate scientific findings into policymaking that will have long-term benefits for ECO Member States from the sustainability perspective, and to promote a more just and sustainable paradigm of development.
- *Called upon* the relevant funds to further simplify the procedures for disbursement of resources so as to take into consideration the special conditions within developing country Parties like the ECO Member States.
- *Expressed readiness* to work together towards promotion of investments and innovative technologies aimed at transformation to green development, notably acceleration of sustainable energy transition, scaling up investments in environmental education and capacity building in ECO Region, raising the funds available where it matters the most; and unlocking higher ambitions.

- *Accentuated* the significance of access to clean energy investments and technologies on preferential terms as an absolute necessity in the context of international commitments undertaken in UN climate change conferences. *Further highlighted* that energy transition and shift to low-carbon development model is directly related to scale of sustainable energy investments and financing.
- *Expressed its conviction* that the energy transition process necessitates a broad dialogue between energy producers and consumers, and that subtle differentiated approach between developed and developing states is crucial to enable the countries with diverse national circumstances, socio-economic development and resources to deliver the climate and energy transition goals. The Meeting further *reaffirmed* that the developing countries must be ensured access to clean energy investments with a view to achieve zero level, and that all decisions on energy transition should be based on a holistic approach to issues of energy and environmental security.